



**CEPPS/IRI GULF REGIONAL Quarterly Report:
April 1, 2005 – June 30, 2005
Strengthening the Gulf Regional Democratization Process**

USAID Cooperative Agreement Number DGC-A-00-10-00004-00

Project Dates: October 1, 2002 to November 30, 2005

Total Budget: \$750,000 Expenses to Date: \$659,921

Project # 7089

I. SUMMARY

IRI plans for a legislative workshop for Majles A'Shura members in June were put on hold by the Majles leadership's decision to postpone the program until September.

II. BACKGROUND

One decade after the Gulf War and two decades after the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran, it is perhaps not surprising that political reform has finally come to member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Having survived a critical period when it seemed to many outside observers that change might be forced upon the monarchies of eastern Arabia by external events, the royal families of the Gulf have emerged more confident than at any time during the last half-century. Where once regime survival dictated internal developments leading, for instance, to abandoned political experiments in Bahrain and Kuwait, ten years of relative stability accompanied by the diminishing or containment of threats emanating from Iran and Iraq have enabled the region's ruling families to devote more attention to matters of domestic concern. In Qatar and Bahrain, where attention to reform was slow in coming, civil unrest in the case of one and generational change in both eventually prompted democratic reforms. In two exceptions to the reform trend, the UAE and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, economic prosperity in the former has allowed the royals to ignore political reform. In the latter, the issue has been somewhat more problematic with demographic pressures and economic uncertainties suggesting that all may not be well in the House of Saud. The question, however, is not if but when these two states will recognize the wisdom of implementing meaningful reforms that may actually prove conducive to the survival of monarchic rule, albeit a rule with more democratic elements.

A surprising aspect of the gradual introduction of representative institutions and democratic reforms in the Gulf is not that they are occurring but that they are occurring in a number of states

almost simultaneously. While Kuwait may claim a proud history of constitutionalism going back to the time of independence from Great Britain in 1961, and Bahrain can point to its own short-lived attempt at electoral reforms in the 1970s as proof of its democratic credentials, the most significant political developments since the end of British colonial rule in the region are, in fact, taking place now. Given the shared history and geographic and familial proximity of the states and their populations, this is no coincidence.

Recognizing that not only are current developments in the Gulf closely related but also that the collective futures of all states therein are inextricably linked, IRI initiated a parliamentary strengthening program in the Sultanate of Oman in 1999, a first step towards programming of a Gulf-wide, regional nature. Since that time, IRI's original program with the appointed Majles A'Dawlah, the upper house of the Council of Oman, has expanded to include the lower house, the elected Majles A'Shura.

Activities with the Council of Oman have included workshops and training in legislative research and policy analysis on the ground in the Sultanate and in offsite locations in Lebanon, Egypt, Canada and the United States. Through programs organized by IRI, Council staff has also participated in conferences and events in the UK, Qatar and Thailand.

III. QUARTERLY ACTIVITIES

Technical Assistance

With the successful completion in February 2005 of the program for members of the Majles A'Shura on reading and understanding legislation, IRI planned to offer continuing assistance towards legislative strengthening during the quarter. Based on the positive feedback generated from the program, IRI proposed to repeat the same program for different members of the Majles A'Shura and a five-day workshop focusing on techniques for understanding, analyzing, and reading legislation with a focus on "what to look for in a bill" was offered for endorsement by the Majles leadership. However, with a busy legislative schedule looming right before the parliamentary summer break, the Majles A'Shura leadership decided it was best to delay the workshop until September.

Professional Development

In August 2005, IRI will support the participation of one Majles A'Shura and one Majles A'Dowlah staff member to the International Federation of Libraries Associations (IFLA) annual conference scheduled to take place in Oslo, Norway. In addition to gaining a better understanding of parliamentary library systems from around the world and developing lasting international contacts, the Omani staff will deliver a short presentation on the services offered by the Majles' library and information services as well as the current level of co-operation that exists between the libraries of the GCC member councils.

IV. RESULTS

Result 1 Increased knowledge and capacity of Gulf legislative staff and council members, enhancing their capacity to influence public policy.

Indicators

- A. IRI will work with governing bodies in the Gulf to help them develop plans for staff and/or member professional development;

No activities to report in this quarter

- B. IRI will coordinate intra-regional exchanges and cooperative training programs in the GCC for the purpose of professional exchange and resource sharing;

No activities to report in this quarter

- C. Staff and members of GCC councils will participate in training and professional development activities both in country and abroad;

A legislative drafting workshop for Majles A'Shura members is slated for September 2005.

- D. Development of regional information resources and the means to exchange and share experiences will lead to increased communication between GCC councils and their respective staffs;

No activities to report in this quarter

- E. Legislative practices and procedures from more advanced models will be adapted and integrated into the GCC through training and exchange;

Legislative drafting techniques from the US and UK will be incorporated into the Majles A'Shura workshop slated for September 2005.

- F. Representative institution building and professionalism in the GCC will become an example for the Arab world.

No new results

Result 2 Local organizations will be supported to improve the understanding of democratic foundations and institutions among a targeted regional audience.

Indicators

- A. Civil society organizations and NGOs will improve organizational capacity and constituencies at the national and local levels through training in the basic skills and principles of nonprofit administration.

No activities to report in this quarter

- B. An informal network of civil society organizations and NGOs dedicated to increasing knowledge of various forms of civic participation will be formed.

No activities to report in this quarter

- C. Civil society will develop an understanding of methods and relevance of democratically run organizations.

No activities to report in this quarter

V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Over the course of 2005, IRI plans to:

- Engage members through the sharing of best practices by elected counterparts from the United States and from elsewhere in the region to begin to develop appreciation for constituent responsibilities.
- Continue member training in the area of reading and understanding legislation.
- Support the participation of two Majles staff persons to the IFLA conference.
- Begin work on designing a one-year training schedule for Majles staff and members.
- Place a parliamentary expert in the Majles A'Shura to meet with department heads and conduct a needs assessment to identify areas of potential IRI assistance.